

ELMER T. JUDD, NORTH DAKOTA ORNITHOLOGIST

BY O. A. STEVENS

NORTH DAKOTA ornithologists have not been numerous, and the death of Elmer T. Judd made a notable gap among them. He was born at Bethel, Connecticut, on June 16, 1866. Even as a boy, he was interested in bird life, and attended meetings of the early and short-lived New Haven Ornithological Club. He came to North Dakota, then still Dakota Territory, in 1887, and settled on a farm eight miles north of Cando, Towner County. This area, situated in rolling prairie country, with many ponds but no streams, far enough north and east to be out of the dry plains region, is admirably suited to encourage ornithological pursuits. Devils Lake, the largest lake in the state, with well wooded edges, is about 40 miles southeast. The Turtle Mountains are about the same distance in an opposite direction, and Rock Lake, a fine large prairie slough, is about 25 miles directly north.

Judd must have sent back to the east glowing descriptions of the bird life of the virgin prairies, for toward the middle of April, 1895, Dr. L. B. Bishop of New Haven, Connecticut, W. H. Hoyt and John Shaler of Stamford, Connecticut, and Homer L. Bigelow of Boston, Massachusetts, came out prepared to study birds in earnest and stayed until the first of August. Dr. Bishop has kindly furnished me the following notes on the visit, which describe the country as an ornithological field and give an intimate picture of Judd.

"Judd was our guide, counsellor and friend, most efficient cook, housekeeper, and driver. After some ten days in Cando, we moved to a small house on Rock Lake, 23 miles north, kindly lent us by Dr. George W. Vaughn of Cando. There were passed some of the happiest days of my life, and most productive ornithologically. The country was unbroken prairie, full of birds, with almost no habitations of white men for 30 miles or more around, farther than we could see or drive. All was our own to collect in a paradise of strange birds, and enjoy in perfect freedom; and we made the most of it.

"With Judd's little bronchos, we roamed the countryside, and studied birds together. Judd drove us, cooked for us and tried to keep us in some order. As the days passed we learned to know him more intimately, admired his sterling honesty of purpose, and his unflinching patience and good temper, and we felt we had left a sincere friend when destiny called us home.

"I spent the summer of 1901, 1902 and 1905 with Alfred Eastgate and his family at Stump Lake, and we scoured all the country northwest to the middle of the Turtle Mountains, collecting. But in 1905 we found all the country, where I formerly roamed in freedom, filled with farms, flax and wheat. East of Rock Lake, where in 1895 there was not a building as far as the eye could see, I counted about 200 farm

buildings in sight from one point across Rock Lake.”

The work of that summer of 1895 and the observations of E. S. Bryant (1894) were used in Judd's "List of North Dakota Birds" (1917), published privately at Cando, which listed 255 forms from the area. Among these were Hoyt's Horned Lark and the Dakota Song Sparrow, which had been collected by the party; Bishop (1896) had named the Song Sparrow for Judd and the Horned Lark for Hoyt. Some years later, Bishop (1921) also described the Lesser Loon from the collections made that summer.

Judd did some collecting himself, but I am uncertain about the amount. Mr. J. E. Graf, Associate Director of the U. S. National Museum, informs me that the museum has in its collections a skin and two sets of eggs of Baird's Sparrow, three skeletons of Prairie Chicken, five sets of eggs of Chestnut-collared Longspur, one set each of the Shoveller and McCown's Longspur, all collected by Judd. The collections of Bigelow passed to the Museum of Comparative Zoology at Harvard College. The extensive collections of skins made by Bishop went to the Field Museum of Natural History in Chicago in 1939, the eggs to the Peabody Museum of Yale University a few years later.

This part of North Dakota has been visited and described by other ornithologists—Herbert K. Job in 1898, A. C. Bent, Bishop and Job, in 1901, and Vernon Bailey and Florence Merriam Bailey in 1913 and 1917. In 1921, Norman A. Wood, of the University of Michigan, visited North Dakota while preparing a list of the birds of the state (1923), and he has kindly sent me the following notes:

“While engaged in a preliminary survey of the bird life of North Dakota in 1921, with headquarters at the Biological Station (of the University of North Dakota, since discontinued) at Devils Lake from May 2 to July 25, Mrs. Wood and I were delighted with a visit from Mr. Judd, who invited us to his home at Cando on June 1st. After a few short trips about Cando in his auto (no longer the bronchos), he drove us north, to and across the boundary line in the same region where Coues worked in 1873, and took a large series of Baird's Sparrow (and where I took my only specimens of this species).

“Another auto trip was made with him to the fish hatchery at Fish Lake in the Turtle Mountains, where we took specimens of the Dakota Song Sparrow in the type region. On May 28, 1921, Mr. Judd drove us to the Sully's Hill National Park and to the Indian Reservation near there. We enjoyed his company and great knowledge of the bird life of the state. Mr. Judd was well known and respected throughout the state, and his passing is a great loss to all who knew him and especially to me who knew him so well.”

Before his paper of 1917 Judd had published three notes on game birds (1891, 1892, 1893) in *Forest and Stream*. I have been unable to find record of any further publications by him, but he continued active

in promoting the conservation of bird life. He was State Game and Fish Commissioner from 1922 to 1924 and president of the North Dakota Audubon Society from 1924 until his death. My own acquaintance with him began about 1925. He was a frequent visitor in Fargo, and we had a number of pleasant discussions. We carried on quite an active correspondence from 1924 to 1926, when he read the manuscript for my own publication (1926), which of course made much use of his. He died at Bismarck, North Dakota, on February 27, 1940, and was buried at Cando, North Dakota.

He became a Master Mason in January, 1890, and his life has been well described by Walter L. Stockwell, Grand Secretary and Librarian (1941).

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